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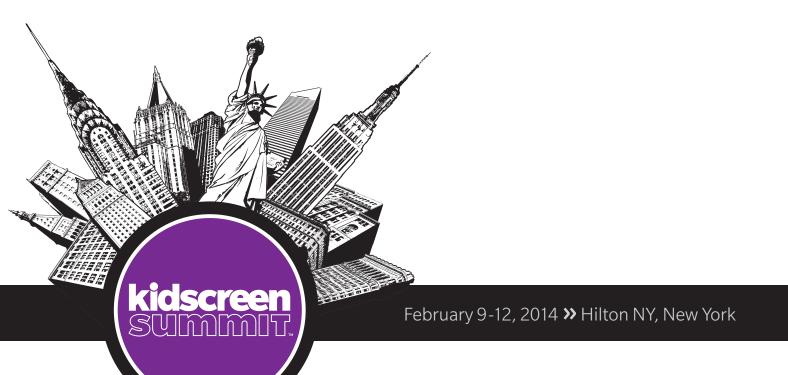




# engaging the global children's entertainment industry

# Cartoon Fortim '13

A sneek-peak at projects set to pop this September in Toulouse



# Registration opens this month!

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# kidscreen nside

### Alloy Digital's Smosh looks to capitalize on its rabid tween/teen boy fanbase with a move into merch

### **Special**

### **Cartoon Forum**

As the European animation crowd gets set to descend on Toulouse in September, we're taking a look at some of the projects set to pop at the vibrant annual market p32

### July/August 2013

### moves 8

Disnev's Adam Bonnett tells us about the role Jack Tripper played in his career

Hot Stuff—With a greenlight from Amazon Studios, Bix Pix builds its originals biz

### tv 14

Getting the balance right when it comes to making animation for girls

TuningIn—Irish pubcaster RTE spins off RTEjr for the preschool set

### consumer products 20

UK indie agency Bulldog Licensing sets up shop in the US

Licensee Lowdown-Turtle Beach tops the licensed headphones heap

### kid insight 25

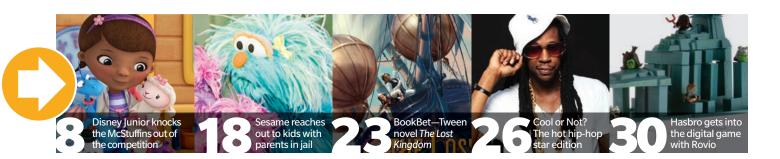
Nick looks into its crystal ball, forecasts three key kid-culture trends to watch

Muse of the Month—Meet Olivia, tween app fanatic and devotee of pretend play

### iKids 29

Atlantyca reveals research on migrating Geronimo Stilton from desktop to mobile

**New Kid in Town**—Ex-TV execs in UK bet on all-in-one preschool app Hopster



Cover Our cover features an ad for Mediatoon's The Garfield Show, season four, while our inside editorial cover sports an image from Imira Entertainment's new adventure-comedy Mondo Yan, debuting at Cartoon Forum in September.

Oops! Kidscreen would like to clarify that the correct web address for PercyVites (featured in May/June's "Percy3D sends invitation to the future," p. 40) is www.percyvites.com. Additionally, PercyVites Thank You notes are 15 seconds in length (not 10 seconds, we reported), and can include a photo and message from the related event, but not video footage.

### **Editorial**

### **Girl talk**

Last Christmas, Swedish tov retailer **TOP-TOY** made headlines around the world with its gender-neutral catalogue. The pages were filled with pictures of boys wielding toy vacuum cleaners and girls holding toy guns. Other European retailers like highend UK department store Harrod's have also been experimenting with merchandising toys by category, not by sex. So, are we on the cusp of a gender-neutral consumer products and programming revolution? Not so much. Judging by the conversations had at Licensing Show in June, recent chats with commissioners and the real, hard numbers surfacing in toyco quarterly reports, it looks like girls are having something of a moment.



Let's start with the numbers. According to researcher The NDP Group, the top two properties of 2012 in terms of growth were Mattel's Monster High and girl-skewing construction toy Lego Friends. Into this year, Monster High helped drive sales increases of 56% and 23% in Mattel's Other Girls category in Q1 and 2, respectively. The toyco's American Girl brand sales, meanwhile, were up 32% and 14% for the same quarters. Sure, flagship girls stalwart Barbie's sales are down, but both Monster High and American Girl are managing to attract that coveted tween consumer, effectively keeping girls coming back to the toy store long after they had been rumored to leave it for good. Similarly, Hasbro's just-published Q2

numbers show its Girls segment sales, led by My Little Pony and Furby, were up by 43%, while its Boys category sales dropped by 35%. (Admittedly, Boys had tough numbers to measure up to. Last year's Q2 had Marvel's Avengers, after all.)

Given all the stellar girl talk in the financials, it wasn't surprising at Licensing Show to find that licensees were on the lookout for new girls properties with breakout potential, especially ones targeting tweens. (Preschool was also on their girls' lists.) It seems that—again thanks to Monster High and Lego Friends—American massmarket retail giants are asking for more girls properties as they discover it's possible to tap into a lucrative, if somewhat fickle, market with a well-conceived and executed idea. And, naturally, licensees are more than eager to please their distributors.

On the programming side, things are a bit trickier. In animation, as Senior Writer Jeremy Dickson notes in this month's "Getting the balance right" (p. 14), girls have been historically under-represented, especially in toons that target older kids. The long-held notion is that girls will watch shows featuring male leads, but boys won't watch ones starring female characters—and girls, for the most part, throw over animation for live action by the time they turn eight. There have been exceptions like Totally Spies!, of course, but they seem few and far between. However, several broadcasters I chatted with at MIPTV said they were willing to try to find that next generation of shows. Now, understanding that producers are becoming increasingly reliant on merchandising deals to get series made—even outside of preschool—and that toycos, in particular, are cottoning onto this new wave of girl power...well, you do the math.

Cheers,

Lana

Watch for the next issue of kidscreen September 2013 Street Date: September 5

July/August 2013 • Volume 18, Issue 4

www.kidscreen.com

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### Subscription rates

Kidscreen is published 7 times per year by Brunico Communications Ltd.
In the US: One year US\$89.00 Two years US\$159.00 Single copy price in the US is US\$7.95. Please allow four weeks for new subscriptions and address changes.

### Postmaster Notification

U.S. Postmaster, send undelive Kidscreen PO BOX 1103 Niagara Falls NY 14304

Canadian Postmaster, send undeliverables and address changes to: Kidscreen PO Box 369, Beeton ON LOG 1A0 Printed in Canada. Canada Post Agreement to. 40050265. ISSN number 1205-7746

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**HEADS UP:** Early-Bird entry fees are in effect, but for a limited time only!

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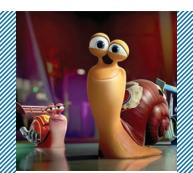
awards.kidscreen.com



### If you can't beat 'em, join 'em

By now, it's clear that traditional toy companies such as Hasbro and Jakks Pacific have caught on to the lucrative benefits of having a finger on the pulse of the digital world. In early July, Hasbro paid US\$112 million in cash for a majority stake in mobile studio Backflip. At the same time, the company announced its Telepod line of Skylander-like interactive toys, which are set to roll out in September with the launch of Rovio's Angry Birds Star Wars II app. Meanwhile, lakks Pacific, which marked a sales slide of 27% in its second guarter, is banking on its upcoming DreamPlay offering of mobilecompatible toys to lift continuously slumping revenues that have led to a company restructuring.





### Netflix, **DreamWorks**

Much like the hero of its latest feature Turbo, DreamWorks Animation is speeding to the finish line when it comes to opportunities in the TV biz. Having inked the biggest original content deal in Netflix's history (with the SVOD provider committing to more than 300 hours of original DWA content) and expecting US\$100 million in TV revenues this year, DWA is planning on huge growth through 2014. Is the deal a game-changer? Stay tuned.



### **Intel gets** into TV

Santa Clara, California-based chip-maker Intel is very serious about getting into the SVOD TV business. According to multiple reports, the company plans to launch its OnCue service before the end of the year. Intel is currently sewing up multiple content deals—and is paying on par with Netflix and Amazon. OnCue will offer live-TV streams and DVR capabilities through a dedicated Intel device. There's no word yet on how traditional cable carriers feel about this, but we can take a guess.



### **Disney Junior** grows up

Move over Dora, it looks like 24-hour competitor Disney Junior is the reigning champion of US preschool TV. According to Nielsen data from July, the 18-month-old Disney Junior was cable TV's top dedicated preschool net in total day for the 14th straight week with kids two to five (168,000/1.0 rating). Additionally, merch sales for Disney Junior shows are expected to surpass US\$1.5 billion this year, up a whopping 50% from 2012.



### App economy accelerates

Just when we thought the app market was reaching saturation, research firm Appnation's new State of the App Economy report predicts that from 2013 to 2017, the US app economy will double in size to US\$151 billion. The comprehensive report also expects that the biggest growth factor on the horizon to be appenabled sales of physical goods and services. That's great news for Toys 'R' Us and Amazon, yes?

To keep up with the news as it happens, check out **Kidscreen.com** daily.

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Growing up, **Adam Bonnett** didn't know what a career in TV really meant, but he identified with adult actors who had childlike sensibilities. "John Ritter was Charlie Chaplin for my generation," he says. Now at Disney Channel, his love of sitcoms has served him well when understanding what makes kids laugh isn't as easy as it seems.

### **Bringing scripted** comedy to new levels

The gig EVP of original programming at Disney Channels Worldwide, where the 16-year Disney vet oversees all live-action development, current original series, movies, casting and talent relations for Disney Channel and Disney XD.

**Breaking into the business** While studying cinema at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. the majority of Bonnett's classmates wanted to become the next Martin Scorsese. Not Bonnett. "Growing up in Silverspring, Maryland, TV played a really big role in my life," he says. "I wasn't a loner. I had a few close friends, but I was closer with Potsie, Fonzie and Jack Tripper than I was with some of the people I went to school with." After acquiring an arts degree in film studies. Bonnett got his first real taste of the entertainment business when he landed a job as a secretary for Rich Ross at Nickelodeon. "I took the job because Nick was owned by Viacom and I really wanted to work at MTV, specifically on Cindy Crawford's House of Style," Bonnett recalls. "I thought if I took the job, I would somehow start a relationship with someone at MTV and they would give me a job on that show. Then I realized how fickle the MTV audience really was." According to Bonnett, Nickelodeon felt like a more sane business model for the arts. "You could still be creative, but there was some sound business logic to it. It was less fickle and I was attracted to that."

**Up the ladder** After a two-year stint working for Ross, Bonnett switched to talent relations and casting at Nick and then worked his way up to assistant, coordinator and manager roles, eventually becoming a director of original programming. In 1997, he was persuaded by Ross (who had moved to Disney), to head west and join the House of Mouse. "Rich was the first person to inspire me and really mentor me, hands on," says Bonnett. "He taught me the importance of passion—when you have it, other people feed off it. And he taught me to read everything that comes across my desk."

Biggest challenge Bonnett says his two career-making moments came when Lizzie McGuire took off on Disney Channel and when the Best of Both Worlds Hannah Montana concert sold out at the Staples Center in L.A. His toughest assignment, however, involved overseeing Disney sitcom Even Stevens, which starred Shia Labeouf before he'd ever met a Transformer. "It turned

> out to be a great show, but the first six episodes were horrible," he says. "Gary Marsh told me the show had potential, but it didn't support Labeouf's talent, so he would have to shut it down." At that point, Marsh asked Bonnett to meet with every show runner in L.A. to get the series back on track. "The clock was ticking and I didn't know a lot of executive producers who could come on board," he says. "Fortunately we found some writers who turned it around, then a couple of years later Shia was at the 2003 Daytime Emmys accepting an award for best performer in a children's series." Bonnett credits Marsh, who's now Disney Channel's current chief, for inspiring him to use every opportunity to make something better.



Liv and Maddie is one of Bonnett's latest

On the future Having developed numerous hit series for Disney, from Wizards of Waverly Place to Crash and Bernstein, Bonnett hopes the channel will continue to re-invent the multi-cam format and grow its programming beyond sitcoms. He points to Disney's newly revamped, kid-friendly and interactive version of game show Win, Lose or Draw and its expansion into live-action shorts as prime examples of how Disney aims to stay fresh. —Jeremy Dickson

### **Dut**of

the frequent fliers club



**Nigel Stone** CEO, Platinum Films, UK

### 1. In my carry-on You'll find Jaffa Cakes





### 2. My go-to gadget

is my mini-movie projector that syncs to my phone so I can squeeze in a movie while I'm on the run.

### 3. On the fly

I had to learn all the lapanese customs before taking a key meeting in Tokyo, from a helpful local sitting near me on the flight.

### 4. Preferred in-air tunes

I'm going to have to stick to my earlier answer of Bruno Marsl



### 5. Best in-flight food

I make it a point to take my own sushi on board, which always gets envious looks from other passengers.

### 6. Best power-lunch

On the beach, fully suited, with your feet in the sand under the table!

### 7. Window or aisle?

Window—I'm a big kid and still play spot the cloud animals!

### **Hot**Stuff

### **Bix Pix clicks with Amazon**

The California prodco's stop-motion preschool series Tumbleaf aims for online success

Who Kelli Bixler, the founder of Sun Valley, California-based Bix Pix Entertainment, a 15-year-old animation company that focuses on stop-motion and mixed media.

**A new option** As a company that provides everything from bit service work to service on large original productions across TV, feature films, music videos, web content and commercials, Bix Pix has made a name for itself through its work for industry heavyweights like Disney, Hasbro and NBC. But thanks to an alliance with Amazon Studios, its first original series is heading into production. The company's 13-minute, stop-motion preschool pilot Tumbleaf appeared on Amazon.com and UK SVOD service LoveFilm in January. Amazon greenlit the concept for a full series in May based on user reviews (budget figures could not be released). Completed Tumbleaf episodes, along with two other new kids shows (Annebots from Sinking Ship's J.J. Johnson and Creative Galaxy from Blue's Clues co-creator Angela Santomero), are set to air exclusively on US service Prime Instant Video later this year as part of Amazon's first foray into original programming. Tumbleaf, created by Bix Pix animation director Andrew Hodges and Bix Pix Entertainment, follows the adventures of Fig, a small blue fox who lives in a whimsical land and discovers friendship and love while exploring his terrain. The series is meant to challenge kids to think scientifically and promote play through exploration.

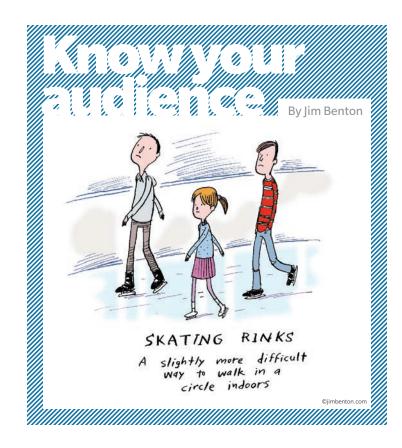
Hatching a plan After encouraging the company's employees to think of pitches in 2006, Bixler says Hodges came to her with an idea centered on a little blue boy who explores his world in nature. "I had worked with Drew long enough by then to know his talents and I thought his idea was beautiful, so we started developing what came to be Tumbleaf," says Bixler. "We pitched to the usual people in the market at different times during its development. Input from these pitch meetings provided additional research and development, then more growth came when Amazon optioned the IP."

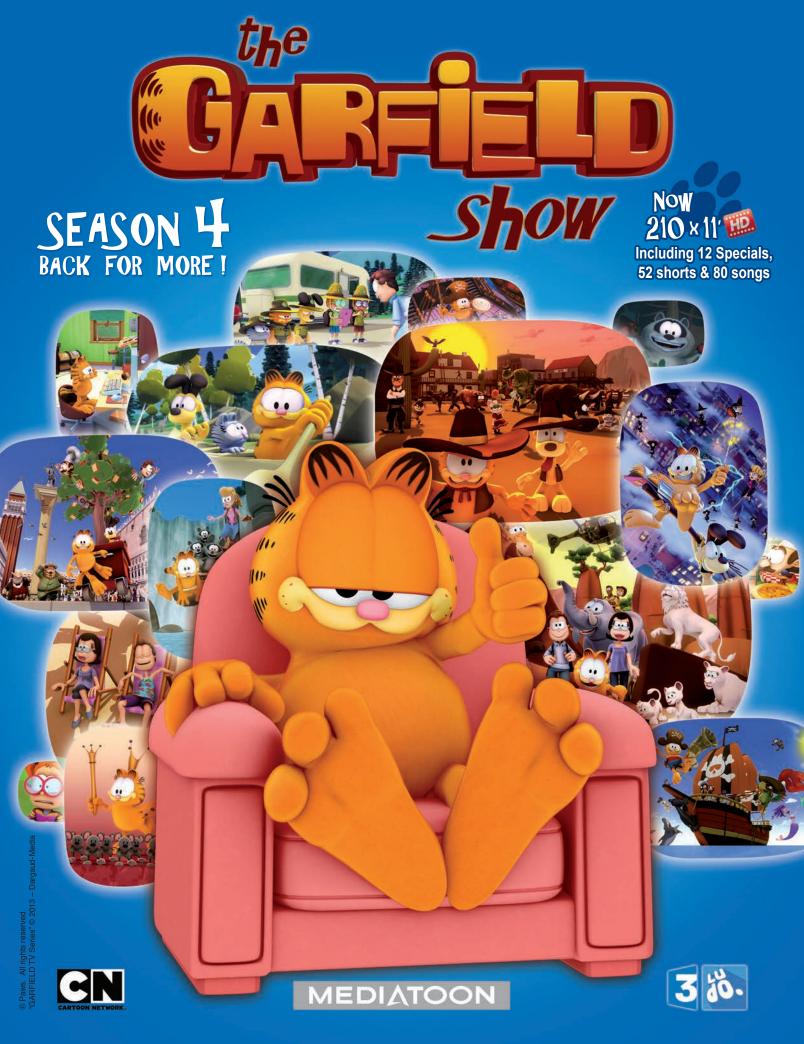
She adds that the reputation of Tara Sorensen, Amazon Studios head of children's series development, coupled with Amazon's consumer clout, helped sway her decision. "For years now, you only had four places [Disney, Nick, CN, PBS Kids] to take your content in the US. It's amazing to have another option. Amazon has experienced huge success and holds even greater potential," she says.

**Next moves** For Bixler, working with Amazon has been a dream come true. "We feel extremely honored to be working with Amazon and making the show we set out to create. We have a great group of people bringing it to life," she says. With Tumbleaf in full swing, Bix Pix expects to grow its originals slate and has several other yet-tobe-announced properties it's currently pitching. Since launching her company, Bixler says the biggest challenge has been finding ways to pay the bills, but through determination and a little bit of luck, Bix Pix has found success. "As an artist, you can't care about making money or being famous. You have to love the work and the community of artists who create the magic." - Jeremy Dickson



With Tumbleaf now in production for Amazon Studios, Bix Pix is busy pitching a new slate of kids series





### people













In aligning its content, digital and gaming businesses, Turner Broadcasting's Young Adults & Kids Media Group upped Rob Sorcher [A] to EVP and chief content officer for Cartoon Network and Mike Lazzo to EVP and creative director for Adult Swim. Both execs will now take on the added responsibilities of overseeing the digital and gaming businesses for each of their areas, along with leading the development and production of original and acquired content for Cartoon Network and Adult Swim. The realignment is meant to drive more cohesion around linear, online, mobile and gaming platforms. Sorcher, who as chief content officer for Cartoon Network, has been responsible for greenlighting series like Adventure Time and Regular Show, will remain in CN's L.A. office. Lazzo, who is the creator of Adult Swim, will work from the company's studios in Atlanta.

In other Turner news, after a 15-year career at Disney, most recently as VP of content and programming strategy for Disney EMEA, Patricia Hidalgo has joined Turner International as its SVP and chief kids content officer for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Hidalgo now manages all programming including acquisitions, coproductions and originals, as well as channel branding, research and franchise projects, and cross-platform editorial compliance. During her time at Disney, Hidalgo launched the first telenovela for kids, rebranded Playhouse Disney and Jetix channels and built a channel launch strategy for Italy. Her hire comes on the heels of a 30% reduction in jobs across Turner International EMEA and Asia Pacific

Over at Viacom, Megan Casey [B] and Claudia Spinelli have been added to the posts of VP, current series. Nickelodeon Animation. In her new role, Casey oversees various shows in current programming for the studio's entertainment productions, such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Kung Fu Panda: The Legends of Awesomeness. Meanwhile, Spinelli oversees

various animated shows in production including Sanjay & Craig and the new Rabbids Invasion. She will continue to serve as the executive in charge on SpongeBob SquarePants.

And at Viacom-owned Paramount Pictures, former Wildbrain Entertainment and 20th Century Fox exec Sabrina Ironside [C] is now SVP of brand management, charged with developing strategies for new Paramount Animation productions. Ironside will lead activities from the pre-theatrical, consumer products, theatrical and home media windows. and enhancing brand profiles with retailers. At Wildbrain, she managed partnerships, promotions, social media and event strategies for Yo Gabba Gabba! Prior to that. she spent a decade at 20th Century Fox and its parent company News Corporation in marketing roles. She's also held posts at Disney and Universal Studios.

Ironside's alma mater, Disney, has tapped independent film and TV producer Naketha Mattocks as

the new of VP of original movies at Disney Channels, where she will supervise creative development for the 11-year-old franchise. Mattocks takes the reigns from former original movies SVP Michael Healy, who left the company in April. She will develop movie scripts, generate new projects, collaborate with writers and directors and oversee creative storytelling throughout the production process. Prior to joining Disney, Mattocks was an indie producer who sold projects to various broadcast and cable television networks, including ABC Family, CBS Films, Hallmark Hall of Fame/ABC and Lifetime Television.

Meanwhile, Canadian media conglomerate Corus Entertainment has made changes to its kids leadership team as part of a company-wide effort to align its TV and radio business units. Corus Television **EVP** and president **Doug** Murphy will become Corus Entertainment EVP and

COO, effective September 1. Colin Bohm, reporting to Murphy, will become VP of television and head of Corus Kids, overseeing all aspects of the Corus Kids business, which will now include kids specialty TV services (YTV, Treehouse, Nick Canada), Nelvana Studio and Nelvana Enterprises. As part of the restructure, Jocelyn **Hamilton** will become VP of programming and original production for Corus Kids.

From Canada to Europe, DHX Media-owned licensing agency CPLG has appointed Pau Pascual [D] to the newly created role of GM of Iberia. Currently the largest independent licensing agency network in Europe, CPLG manages the rights to such brands as Mr Men and Little Miss in the Iberian region. Pascual joined CPLG Spain in 2010 as marketing, sales and retail director for all CPLG brands. Prior to that, he managed the global licensing operations of FC Barcelona Merchandising, a Spanish affiliate of Nike.

For more People Moves, head over to kidscreen.com/category/people-moves

### On the circuit Notes for the industry travel diary

### September 9-11 **World Congress of Play** San Francisco, California

www.worldcongressofplay.com

Like its name suggests, the inaugural World Congress of Play will bring together executives across all facets of the play industry-from traditional toys and board games to interactive. The conference is designed to build new relationships, ideas and business plans amidst a rapidly changing play market. With so many sectors of the business together in one place, there's nothing like a little healthy competition to get the creative juices flowing.

### September 17-20 **Cartoon Forum Toulouse, France**

www.cartoon-media.eu

Taking place in Tolouse, France, this annual co-production forum for animated TV series is expected to draw more than 800 participants from 32 countries, as well as 250 buyers. The forum provides European producers with the opportunity to pitch animated projects to decision-makers, buyers and investors, and an estimated 70 projects will be pitched this September. Also up for viewing is the gorgeous scenery of southwestern Europe.



October 7-10 **MIPCOM** Cannes, France www.mipcom.com



The global market for entertainment content makes its return this October, when the industry's leaders across multiple platforms meet in Cannes for four days. From blockbusters to indie productions, and everything in between, this year's MIPCOM will draw an estimated 13,000 participants, 4,400 buyers and 1,700 exhibitors across 100 countries, and they'll consume untold gallons of rosé.

A full listing of Industry Events is available at kidscreen.com/events



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As demand for strong girlled preschool animated series increases, will gender imbalances become a thing of the past?

BY JEREMY DICKSON

ith the long-term success of girl-skewing series/brands like Nickelodeon's Dora the Explorer and Hasbro's My Little Pony, and the growing profile of newer girlled properties including Doc McStuffins from Disney and Mattel's Monster High, it might appear as though the kids TV biz is turning a corner on gender representation in animation. Historically dominated by male protagonists, a closer look at recent stats shows there is still much work to be done in redressing the gender imbalance present in children's animation. A 2012 study from The Geena Davis Institute of Gender in Media entitled Gender Roles and Occupations: A Look at Character Attributes and Job-Related Aspirations in Film and Television, analyzed 11,927 speaking characters in family films, primetime programming and cable programming for children (across Disney, Nickelodeon and PBS) between 2006 and 2011. It found that only 30.8% of kids show characters are female, while you'll find 28% in family feature films and 38.9% in primetime programming.

Shimmer and Shine is Nick's
latest preschool show in
development to feature strong
female protagonists and stories
that appeal to girls and boys

Fortunately, broadcasters seem to be taking note. On the preschool side, Disney, Nickelodeon and UK pubcaster CBeebies have started stocking their original production pipelines with more girl characters over the last two years. Whether breakout hits like *Sofia the First* or *Doc McStuffins* have the staying power of a *Dora* remains to be seen, but one thing's for certain—creating a great girl character isn't easy.

"Yes, there is a need for girl-targeting shows in animation, but you have to be careful who you target and how you do it," says Finn Arnesen, Hasbro Studios SVP of international distribution and development. He notes that there are fewer girl-skewing properties in animation because girls mature faster than boys and want to watch less animation as they move beyond preschool shows. "At eight years old they want to watch more primetime, tween live-action shows that better reflect their lives," he says. "It's increasingly hard in animation to get that stand-out girls IP that breaks through to a wider demo. Winx Club [Rainbow] and Totally Spies! [Marathon Media] got it right and are now watched by the four to six and nine to 11 girl demos." He adds that he expects to see more girl-focused animated shows that skew younger try to attract an older tween demo.

Josh Scherba, SVP of distribution at DHX Media, agrees there is a need for more girl-led animation, especially for girls six to seven, but new shows will have to attract both sexes. "For animation in particular, there is a need for more gender-neutral comedies. When you get the comedy right, that is the magic sweet spot," Scherba says. "Globally successful series like *Phineas and Ferb* that really get the gender-neutral balance—those are the home runs that everyone is looking for."

### Do boys and girls care?

During qualitative interviews conducted for a 2010 content analysis of the top-100 shows for kids ages six to 11, Nickelodeon's Consumer Insights Research group found that 75% of the boys and girls they interviewed said the sex of a lead character didn't matter to them. Similarly, Jackie Edwards, executive producer of animation and acquisitions for preschool net CBeebies, contends that great characters and stories define shows, not gender. "Kids could care less whether it's a strong boy or girl character. *Mike the Knight* feels like a boy-skewing show because it has strong boy characters, but it also stars Mike's sister Evie, who is a strong girl character, and boys and girls love that show."

Despite the fact that boy characters still outnumber girls in kids TV overall, Teri Weiss, EVP of production and development for Nickelodeon Preschool, says gender stereotypes have been significantly minimized, particularly in preschool programming. "Kids are ultimately the people who make those decisions," Weiss says. "They are incredibly open-minded at the preschool level and it has worked to our advantage. Nick has had tremendous success with strong female leads and breaking stereotypes in shows like *iCarly*, *Victorious* and *Dora*." With animated *Dora* spinoff *Dora and Friends* set to launch in 2013/14,

SheZow gets last laugh Male cartoon characters dressing up as women for jokes is nothing newjust ask Bugs Bunny. The wascally wabbit's been doing it since the 1940s. Perhaps it was somewhat shocking at the time, but viewers got over it and saw it for what it was, just plain funny. Considering the comedic history of men dressing as women (Milton Berle, Charlie Chaplin, Monty Python), it was certainly surprising when Obie Scott Wade's new 52 x 11-minute animated series SheZow met with a raft of criticism when it launched in May 2013 on The Hub. Several US conservative Christian groups declared the show's protagonist, a 12-year-old boy who inherits the superhero persona of his deceased aunt, transgendered and were offended that the

for laughs. Since its launch, however, the backlash has subsided. The series is generating strong ratings in the US and was recently sold into Belgium, France, Italy and Slovenia by distributor DHX Media.

In a statement provided by The Hub, showrunner Wade says he did not set out to make a political statement with SheZow. "I set out to create a comedy. While the character of Guy does learn many things about himself by becoming SheZow, the main focus is on responsibility and less on gender," Wade says. "The SheZow mythology is a classic hero's journey. It's about the conflict surrounding an ordinary slacker who is suddenly forced to save the world, but with a unique story element that adds a lot of comedy."

brand-new *iCarly/Victorious* spinoff series *Sam & Cat* ranked as Nick's number-one live-action series (at press time), and new shows like 2D-animated preschool series *Shimmer and Shine* (working title in development), Weiss says the future looks bright for the network's girl-skewing shows. "If you have a great girl character, you are setting yourself up for success," she says. "I think we will continue our heritage of strong female protagonists, and I do anticipate that the Nick Jr. pipeline will be more robust than it's ever been."

toon used cross-dressing

### **Key ingredients**

So what makes a good gender-neutral animated comedy series with girl characters? Arnesen believes a strong female lead should be relevant, upbeat, positive, funny and a little kick-ass. "They also have to be a little bit vulnerable so kids can reflect these characters in themselves," he says. "You need to get to a point where the show you're making is not reliant on the fact you have a strong girl character. Good story writing will negate that need."

How a girls brand is built for potential success and a broad demo, according to Arnesen, also depends on whether it's an



original series, a reboot or a series based on a toy IP. When Hasbro launched the 2012 version of its *Littlest Pet Shop* series, the property already had the attention of younger girls as a very successful collectible toy franchise. To help age-up the franchise through plot and story, Hasbro made the series' lead

character, Blythe, 11 years old. "She's an older, independent girl who moved to the big city with her dad. She's interested in fashion and has to deal with problems teen and tween girls face, like coping with a group of mean girls at school."

Knowing what kids are interested in and what they find funny is also paramount for producers wading into this territory. A 2013 Cartoon Network quantitative research study that surveyed 2,200 US kids ages six to 14—evenly distributed across boys and girls—found that pre-adolescents 11 to 14 enjoyed peer-oriented humor involving references to fitting in and popularity. And while boys nine to 11 start to prefer aggressive physical humor, girls at this age show a preference for aggressive verbal humor (nicknames, inside jokes). For boys and girls ages six to nine, the differences are a little less apparent, with potty humor and jokes about defying norms getting the best reactions from both sexes.

The results suggest that while boys and girls at certain ages do find similar things funny, there will always be some things girls find funnier than boys and vice versa. According to Arnesen, gender roles won't change fundamentally over time. "Boys will always be boys and girls will always be girls to a certain age, and there will always be exceptions," he says. "I don't think we are going to lose the skew for boys and girls. We won't become a homogenized gender- neutral society. There is always a case for making boy- and girl-skewed programming." (§



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In Never Bored, RTEjr host Reuben helps kids find hilarious ways to have fun in dull places

Ireland's first dedicated preschool channel is on the lookout for culturally relevant content

The challenge April saw the launch of RTEjr, Irish pubcaster RTE's first dedicated, free-to-air preschool channel and multiplatform brand targeting kids seven and under. Although it didn't have ratings to report at press time, the kidsnet penetrates 44% of TV households in Ireland (Nielsen, April 2013) via Saorview Channel 7, Ireland's national digital terrestrial television service, and is also available nationally through digital cable provider UPC Ireland and satellite broadcasting service Sky Ireland. In keeping up with media consumption trends of today's youngest kids, RTEjr is also accessible through RTEjr Radio, a free RTEjr iOS app, online at www.rte.ie, and on-demand through UPC Horizon. Addressing the needs of preschoolers and their parents, families, and guardians, the channel offers a diverse selection of Irish and international children's programming 12 hours per day with a 70/30 acquisitions versus commissions split. As the channel grows across platforms, it's looking to solidify its Irish identity and grow co-viewing opportunities.

The programming RTE cross-divisional head of children's content Sheila DeCourcy says RTEjr is in the first phase of a three-year strategic plan to update the broadcaster. "Our philosophy for this age group is to create a culturally relevant and specific schedule that explores the world preschoolers grow up in. We're very conscious of making a uniquely Irish channel," says DeCourcy. She adds that the channel's lineup consists of animated and live-action shows in English and Irish that are fun, safe and educational. Popular acquired toons currently airing include Peppa Pig, Mike the Knight, Tilly and Friends and Fireman Sam, while Lazytown, Hi-5 and Grandpa in my Pocket are a few of the channel's featured live-action series.

**Local flavor** Although the channel has yet to field its first quarter of ratings, DeCourcy says that Irish shows are among the channel's top performers and many are shorter in length. "Rather than go for half-hour series or blocks, the shows are short so they frame the acquired series," she says. "It was a deliberate

strategy that gives the channel a very Irish feel." For example, RTEjr Workshop is a series of two-minute episodes starring entertainer/magician Reuben and his trusty cow sidekick Bo-the bilingual hosts of RTEjr also help fill the gaps between longerformat shows. And a number of 30-second, in-house produced interstitials branded Kidspeak run throughout the day as a regular part of the programming lineup. The clips feature the stories and activities of kids living in Ireland, and DeCourcy says about 200 eps are commissioned per year, with RTE holding a total library of between 800 and 900 episodes. Another in-house production, The Beo Show (100 x seven minutes) is a live-action musical/comedy set in a rural theater that features real kids who work together with professional musicians on a performance piece. "We also commissioned a song from Octonauts composer Darren Hendley entitled 'What's Your Thing' as the identity/theme of the channel," adds DeCourcy.

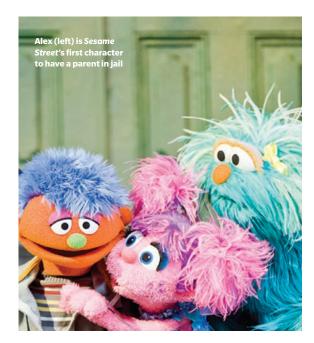
**Next moves** DeCourcy says viewers can expect a number of new Irish shows to bow this summer and fall, including *Pick a Story*, a 60 x four-minute series featuring tales based on pictures submitted by kids across Ireland, and *Meet the Orchestra* (15 x five minutes for TV and radio). For re-commissions, a second season of *Punky*, the acclaimed animated series told from the perspective of a child with Down Syndrome, will air this fall along with new seasons of *Never Bored*, *The Beo Show*, *Tell Me a Story*, *The Curious World*, *Storytime*, *Spraoi*, *Forest Force* and *Why Guy*.

Looking to expand its programming, DeCourcy and her team will be actively looking for more comedy and live-action content, and shows that appeal to kids as young as four and as old as nine. Plans are also currently underway to develop ideas and characters for RTEjr Radio that could potentially work for TV and apps. "We're very interested in developing listening skills in children and sound-based content, which could be moved onto an app," says DeCourcy. "Animation is incredibly expensive to develop, and right now, we have to look at what is the best way to explore character, story and sound." —Jeremy Dickson



### NowTrending-Media

What's bubbling up in kid content culture



### Sesame takes on parental incarceration

When it comes to reaching a wider demographic of kids with different backgrounds, Sesame Workshop keeps breaking ground. In June, as part of Little Children, Big Challenges—Sesame Workshop's multimedia outreach initiative that launched in 2012 and aims to help children and families persevere through difficult changes—the Workshop introduced Alex, a new character whose father is in prison. Having recently tackled the topic of divorce for the first time in its 43-year broadcasting history, incarceration is the latest topic featured by the initiative in a series of online videos and free resources for kids and caregivers at sesamestreet.org. Considering that a 2010 report by The Pew Charitable Trusts found that one in 28 American children (3.6%) have an incarcerated parent (that's 2.7 million American kids), it's good to see Sesame Workshop hasn't lost its edge in addressing the tougher issues in kids' lives.

### The more parents watch TV, the more kids tune in

A new study by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center in Philadelphia published in the July issue of medical journal Pediatrics finds that the biggest influence on children's TV watching habits is how much their parents watch TV. Whether kids have a television in their bedroom, how many screens are in the home, or TV restrictions enforced by parents are all secondary factors. The report, which is based on an online survey of 1,500 US parents with children 17 years or younger, found that for every hour a mom or dad watches television, their kids will watch an additional 23 minutes of it. Also revealed is the fact that parents, on average, watch about four hours of TV per day, versus three hours for kids—46% of which have a TV in their bedroom. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a limit of two hours per day of non-educational screen time for older children.

# ANIMATION FROM SPAIN >



The most successful children's content!





Internet tween/
teen destination
Smosh looks
to translate
its network
of 11 million
subscribers into
CP sales

BY GARY RUSAK

you haven't heard of content network Smosh yet, you probably don't know any tween boys. Currently, the Smosh YouTube channel is the single most subscribed-to destination on the site, with 11 million subscribers. Smosh has also extended its brand into secondary channels like Shut Up! Cartoons, which features 16 original series, Spanish-language El Smosh, and video game-focused Smosh Games, which have a tight grip on a predominately male tween and teen audience. Now, brand owner Alloy Digital is aiming to turn Smosh's virtual success into a physical reality, appointing New York-based The Joester Loria Group to lead the channel's first foray into licensing.

Smosh made its YouTube debut in 2005 with Flash-animated video *Pokémon Theme Song*, which quickly became the most-viewed video on the site. Its young creators Ian Hecox and Anthony Padilla (both well under 30 years old) got Smosh started by creating unique content that melded their interests in video games, snack food and pop culture. Videos included lip-synched theme songs for *Mortal Combat* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and a host of video game reviews, all tinged with quirky, off-the-cuff comedy that set a fun DIY tone for the burgeoning channel.

All in all, Smosh's five different YouTube channels now boast 15.9 million subscribers, 3.3 billion lifetime video streams, six million social media followers and a host of spin-off franchises, including Food Battle, Ian is Bored and Lunchtime with Smosh. In short, it's a vibrant online portal with a rabid fanbase and an enviable treasure trove of continuously produced content.

While Smosh is estimated to gross around US\$10 million a year, from shared ad revenue and online sales of branded apparel, its steady flow of content and dedicated fanbase seemingly cries out for a more extensive, mainstream L&M program.

"The videos and the sites have a real authentic connection to the audience," says Barry Blumberg, EVP of Alloy Digital. "It's borne out of the mind of two young guys who are very much connected to their audience."

Blumberg, a former VP at Disney Animation, is currently the president of Smosh for Alloy Digital. The New York-based company purchased the Smosh network in 2009 for an undisclosed sum.

He says after much discussion with various agents, The Joester Loria Group seemed like a logical choice, given its experience in migrating brands from the virtual to physical world, particularly with YouTube sensation (now Cartoon Network series) Annoying Orange, which it started repping last year.

However, developing products around a digital brand built upon authenticity and irreverence might not be as easy as it seems. "We aren't looking to manipulate the content to accommodate products," says Debra Joester, president and CEO of The Joester Loria Group, describing the fine balance that must be struck when creating products specifically tied to content. "We know we have a really savvy audience, so we are looking to develop products that are an organic extension of what it's watching."

An innovative idea that the agency is currently toying with is to create products that will first be seeded in the online content and then, with a proper and as-yet-undetermined gestation period, end up on store shelves.

"Food is one category where we could possibly reverse-engineer a product," says Joester. She worked with a similar formula while repping MTV's *South Park* during its successful Cheesy Poofs campaign. The snack food was first mentioned on the series as a running joke, but eventually it ended up on specialty store shelves in the US.

Joester adds that it would be interesting to have a confectionery product first appear in one of Smosh's better-known shows. She believes *Food Battle*, where two different junk foods are pitted against each other in a series of outrageous challenges like "What can do more everyday tasks: A burrito or a pink-frosted doughnut?" would be a natural fit. But to succeed at reverse engineering, Joester knows that achieving speed to market while coordinating content and licensee goals will be the biggest challenge. "The manufacturer will have to be part of the process," she says. "We'll have to create the product with them, and then it will end up in the show, and then we will have to take it to retail."

Joester also notes that because Smosh is a digital platform, product seeding falls outside of standard regulations that restrict product placement in kid-skewing programming airing on old-school broadcast/cable television. "It lets us be a little bit more creative," she concedes. "Of course, it's doubly important to be smart about what we are doing because we are dealing with consumers who are very smart and definitely don't want anything to do with something that looks like a big commercial."

More traditional products are also in the works, including publishing extensions and accessories. And perhaps what will jump-start Smosh's licensing program is the migration of the umbrella brand into traditional platforms like cable TV, which seems like a foregone conclusion at this point. "We have a lot of TV and traditional entertainment in development," says Blumberg. "But we're not going to do a TV show just to do a TV show. It has got to be right for the brand."

The same guiding principle, he says, will be followed for any consumer products extensions. "We aren't going to do label-slapping," he says. "In the digital space we can control 100% of what we do. In these traditional channels we can't, but that is why we have chosen the best partners." 3

### **Westward ho!**

### Britain's Bulldog Licensing opens US office to export IPs

UK

-based agency Bulldog Licensing, which represents brands like Plants vs. Zombies, Gogo's Crazy Bones and Monkey, opened an office in the US last month to help shepherd its growing stable of IPs into the world's most lucrative licensing and merchandising market.

"It has always been on the agenda," says Rob Corney, group MD of Bulldog Licensing. "We have identified areas that have the potential to grow, and the US just made a lot of sense."

Corney says IP owners in the UK are often at a disadvantage when exporting their brands because they use agents that might not have expertise with the US market or know the ins and outs of a particular license's attributes.

"To have that listening post [in the US] will be a great advantage," he says. "We won't have to manage it all from thousands of miles away. We can offer a different route to IP owners other than just dumping stuff on third-party agents."

Corney has tapped US licensing vet Laurie Windrow, who has decades of experience in the licensing world with A2 Entertainment Company, Mega Brands and 4 Kids Entertainment, to set up the US shop.

"We decided that it was the right time," says Windrow, MD of Bulldog Licensing, from the firm's New Jersey-based location. "With [eOne's] Peppa Pig and other IP, we have seen a few things that have come from the UK and have had success in the US, and we will certainly be looking for more opportunities."

On the front burner for the US office is a new relationship it's struck with UK-based football (a.k.a. soccer, stateside) magazine *Shoot*. "It's the leading football annual in the UK and it's an incredibly well-known brand," says Corney. "We see it as a strong play for the US right now."

Windrow says that the increased interest in soccer in the US, leading up to the World Cup, will open stateside retailers' eyes to the brand. As well, look for Bulldog's US branch to specialize in bringing popular non-TV, design-led British brands to specialty American retailers in the coming years.

"There are a couple of high priorities with some UK brands that we are in talks with right now," Windrow says. "There are brands that really have should have been here for awhile that we think can certainly fit into the US market." – Gary Rusak



Bulldog's new US office is hoping to bring UK sports brand Shoot to the country



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### **Licensee**Lowdown

# Turtle Beach tops licensed headphone heap

Who Valhalla, New York-based Turtle Beach grew out of the computer sound card business to become the world's leading gaming headphone company. With more than 50% of the growing category's market share, the company—which developed the first integrated headset with game and chat sound in both ears at the beginning of the MMOG wave in the late 1990s—has continued to innovate the audio experience. "It is our goal to be evangelists for audio in the game industry," says CMO Bob Picunko. "Developers spend time, money, energy and talent working on the audio track...We would like buying a headset to be as natural as buying a controller."

What The company's first license was for Activision's Call of Duty franchise. "For us it was perfect," says Picunko. "Activision had a real focus on the audio with musical score, licensed music and voice actors. It's a great example of gaming audio at its apex." By offering three Call of Duty SKUs with Shadow, Spectre and Phantom lines, Turtle Beach headphones offered headsets that were specifically designed to integrate seamlessly into the game. For example, standard voice prompts, which had previously been voiced by generic actors, began to feature voices from the game. "We want to have a headset that has the personality of the game," says Picunko. "It's not just a headset with a logo on it." The products proved successful and the Activision/Turtle Beach partnership continues with specific items being made for major releases, such as Modern Warfare 3, Black Ops 2 and this year's Ghosts.

**Latest innovation** While sewing up both technological partnerships with audio companies like Dolby and DTS, and platforms like Microsoft and Nintendo, Turtle Beach continues to develop relationships that will allow it to further enhance its branded products. "Now we can work with these companies to get a better understanding of

the insides of the platforms," he says. "For Batman Arkham City, we did voice prompts and special audio presets, so a fan of the game could download and customize the audio. Since we now have a two-year deal with Activision, we can work on the products sooner and we see a lot of opportunities on the horizon."

What's Next At San Diego Comic-Con in mid-July, Turtle Beach unveiled its latest licensing partnership with Disney-owned Marvel. The Marvel Seven line includes a number of high-end audio options that you would expect, including dynamic chat boost and memoryfoam ear cushions. But of particular interest to collectors are the limited-edition Marvel speaker plates, which are each adorned with its characters. These will be sold separately and include Hulk, Iron Man, Daredevil and Wolverine, with more to come. "We have created an overall entertainment headset," says Picunko. "There are a number of Marvel games and releases coming out and when you are playing a game on your Xbox, or watching a movie on your tablet, hopefully you'll be wearing a Marvel headset while you do it."

**Contact** Bob Picunko, CMO, Turtle Beach (bob.picunko@turtlebeach.com, 914-909-7880) – Gary Rusak



### **Book**Bet **The Lost Kingdom**

Award-winning author Matthew J. Kirby's genre-bending *The Lost Kingdom* brings a touch of sci-fi to the American West as he spins the yarn of Billy Bartram. The young hero joins his father and a secret society of philosophers and scientists in a harrowing search for a long-lost civilization throughout the untamed American West. The epic journey has everything from flying spaceships and French soldiers, to double agents and unearthly creatures. Coming in at 352 pages and retailing for US\$17.99, Scholastic Press is targeting boys eight to 12 and will introduce the hardcover to mass retail on September 1. –Gary Rusak



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# Through the looking glass

From zombies and the apocalypse to gadgets that inspire kid creativity, Nickelodeon hones in on three trends to watch

BY ERIN MILLER



ur team at Nick is devoted to knowing and understanding our audience. We are in the field weekly, talking to kids and parents, and exploring what's happening across the cultural landscape. In this month's Kaleidoscope, we're offering a sneak-peek at some key trends we've been observing and are keeping an eye on.

Observational trend 1: A Post-Apocalyptic World. More and more, we're seeing a rise in post-apocalyptic content across TV screens, books and theaters—and kids love it! The truth is that kids know how bad things can and do get in today's world. They're constantly exposed to the news in their homes and schools, and have open dialogue with their parents on everything from the economy to world news. Post-apocalyptic content offers an extreme look at what the world could be like. This vision is appealing to kids because it's based in what could be reality (and that's intriguing), yet it's so extreme that kids can distance themselves safely. Hunger Games was a trailblazer in this genre for spanning several age groups and having broad appeal with boys and girls. And kids are already anxiously awaiting the sequel, Catching Fire, which hits theaters in November. This franchise opened the door to similar books to move into feature films, and one to keep an eye out for is Divergent, the first movie starring Shailene Woodley based on the best-selling books of the same name. It's also worth mentioning that this summer saw three major films set in postapocalyptic worlds-World War Z (Brad Pitt), After Earth (Will and Jaden Smith) and Elysium (Matt Damon). From a TV standpoint, The Walking Dead is resonating with boys and girls as a show they like to watch, and who could overlook the popularity of the gaming app Plants vs. Zombies.

Observational trend 2: Make Everyday Father's Day. Within the past few years, we've seen the rise of mom—as the CEO of her home, as a woman and a mother. Marketers and brands went to great lengths to bring this message to moms, and in the midst of doing so, left dads behind. Oftentimes, we found dads were flat-out offended at how they were being portrayed—as the butt of jokes, the clueless family member, or mocked for parenting. A dad backlash surfaced, and we heard this loud and clear in our research. Now is the time to celebrate dad everyday! We know that dads want to be involved with their families in a way their fathers weren't, and the fact is that they are involved. Brands such as Hyundai, P&G, Google and Oreo (to name a few) have



ads that tap into the nurturing, involved and caring side of dad. These are key attributes that are sure to resonate with today's modern family.

Observational trend 3: Kid Creation. We feel this will be a key emerging trend, especially for the post-millennial generation. This particular group of kids has had a sense of control since the day they were born. Parents think they're smart, and the kids think they're smarter. There are toys, programs and tools at their fingertips that are priming these kids to be creators and innovators on their terms. Minecraft, which allows kids to create unique environments, is just one example of how this is manifested in the digital space. Mirroring the virtual world experience, what Minecraft does that virtual worlds don't is allow kids to create their own environments, thus taking their creativity to the next level. Instagram is another example of how tweens and teens are creating on their own terms. We see them using Instagram not just to post pictures, but also to upload photos of their text chats and take pics of written status updates to post. Tweens and teens are recreating the Facebook experience they're familiar with, but in an entirely new environment. Finally, Vine and the newly announced Instagram video are inspiring creativity in a fun, quick and easy way. But this goes beyond just digital. Toys like LEGO have long flexed kids' creative muscles, and moms and kids tell us that they look for toys that encourage kids to use their imaginations and stimulate creativity. And from a tech perspective, we see gadgets like the interactive blocks LightUps that allow kids to create electronic components (batteries, light sensors, buzzers), and 3D printers, which are becoming more affordable and sold in big box stores like Toys 'R' Us (in Hong Kong only). What's the bottom line? Never has there been such an advanced, accessible and kid-friendly way for children to create. This concludes our sneak peek at emerging trends. (3)

Next month's Kaleidoscope will explore kids and toys. For more information, contact kaleidoscope@nick.com

(Source: Nickelodeon Group Consumer Insights Research)

A major focus of the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family is to live and breathe kid culture. We continually track and identify trends, and explore what it means to be a kid and teen today. In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumer, we've created the Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.

### **Muse** of the **Month**

### Never too old to pretend

### Game-based apps for tweens fuel Olivia's real-life pretend play patterns



eet 10-year-old Olivia—explorer, princess, tigress. Like many tweens, Olivia plays gamebased apps that transport her to new worlds and engage her in everything from action-packed challenges (*Temple Run 2*) to glamorous makeovers (*Princess Salon*). However, for Olivia, these apps mainly fuel

her colossal imagination. She prefers bringing games to life rather than playing them on her family's Kindle. Getting ideas from apps, she and her friends in Wisconsin go on backyard "quests," try on dresses and makeup, and pretend to be dogs and cats.

While many kids Olivia's age have left pretend play behind, she makes it uniquely tween by incorporating key benefits that they crave—social connection and customization. She remarks, "I think real-life [play] is more fun because I can play with my friends and sisters. Apps, I play alone. And on the Kindle, you have to play in a certain order. In real life we can play whatever way we want."

In a strong sense, Olivia models an opportunity for media and toy creators. Valuable play patterns like pretending don't have to fall away as kids get older—they just have to grow with the child, addressing their latest needs. –Insight Kids



Insight Kids is a research and strategic consulting company dedicated to catalyzing our clients to build innovative, impactful and inspiring experi-

ences for kids and families. To be further inspired by Reagan and Insight Kids, visit www.insightstrategygroup.com/insightkids/.

### Cool or Not? The hot hip-hop stars edition



**Prince Royce** 

| <b>Boys 8 to 11</b> (126) | <b>Girls 8 to 11</b> (116) | <b>Boys 12 to 15</b> (145) | <b>Girls</b><br><b>12 to 15</b><br>(117) |                       | <b>Boys 8 to 11</b> (179) | <b>Girls</b><br><b>8 to 11</b><br>(168) | <b>Boys</b> 12 to 15 (214) | <b>Girls 12 to 15</b> (189) |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 35.7%                     | 40.5%                      | 18.6%                      | 24.8%                                    | Totally way cool *    | 60.3%                     | 44.0%                                   | 42.5%                      | 27.5%                       |
| 7.9%                      | 12.1%                      | 11.7%                      | 13.7%                                    | Very cool *           | 16.8%                     | 19.0%                                   | 15.9%                      | 15.3%                       |
| 19.0%                     | 19.8%                      | 22.8%                      | 32.5%                                    | Kinda cool *          | 7.8%                      | 20.2%                                   | 21.5%                      | 31.2%                       |
| 11.1%                     | 12.1%                      | 15.2%                      | 12.8%                                    | Not cool *            | 7.3%                      | 10.1%                                   | 6.1%                       | 11.1%                       |
| 26.2%                     | 15.5%                      | 31.7%                      | 16.2%                                    | Totally un-cool *     | 7.8%                      | 6.5%                                    | 14.0%                      | 14.8%                       |
| 53.3%                     | 56.4%                      | 45.3%                      | 57%                                      | Don't know what it is | 33.5%                     | 37.1%                                   | 20.4%                      | 29.5%                       |

Excludes "Don't know what it is" responses

2 Chainz



Cool or Not? is part of KidSay's April/May 2013 Trend Tracker. These one-of-a-kind research reports are published 10 times a year and provide a quantitative and qualitative picture of kids' likes, dislikes and trends gathered through in-school surveys with US kids ages five to 15. Contact Bob Reynolds (913-390-8110 or **bob@kidsay.com**).



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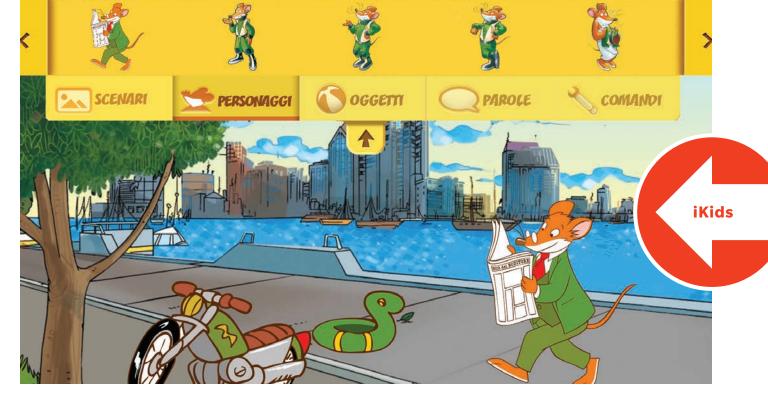
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### Following the mouse

A recent study conducted by the University of Milan helped inform Geronimo Stilton's move from desktop to mobile—and expose some fundamental differences between the two platforms

BY WENDY GOLDMAN GETZLER

eronimo Stilton, the fictitious rodent reporter that's moved from publishing to TV and a robust European licensing program, recently starred in his very own investigation. Milan, Italy-based Atlantyca Entertainment's new mobile app featuring its flagship character was the focus of *The Augmented Kids: Geronimo Stilton in the Kingdom of Digital Natives*, a study conducted by professor Paolo Ferri from the University of Milan-Bicocca on kids' varying interactions with PC and tablet platforms. As more properties move from desktop computers into the mobile space, and vice versa, the *Digital Natives* findings not only informed the development of the Geronimo Stilton app, they also offer a glimpse into the inherent differences between developing for PC and tablet platforms.

"We are under the impression that digital children's needs are changing and are different from the older generation of kids that we originally developed for," says Claudia Mazzucco, CEO of Atlantyca. "There were anthropological questions that the university was asking, and we committed because we are content providers." Atlantyca got involved in the study, which is part of ongoing research on the appropriation of digital media by children between zero and 10, when it became aware, as it was developing its first Geronimo Stilton app, that traffic to the brand's website from mobile devices was up by more than 175%. The two-year-old online community—now available in 18 languages—draws more than three million page views per month and served as the basis for the first Geronimo Stilton app. "However, we didn't want to just convert the website. We wanted to create something entirely new for a different touch-based medium," says Mazzucco.

On four separate occasions, the students ages seven to nine at primary school Istituto Comprensivo Copernico were given an Alpha version of the app on tablet devices and were provided with similar content on a PC. The trials showed that tablets offer a more immersive environment for creating, which is not as feasible in a hyper-mediated channel such as the web. Touch also fosters more modes for collaboration and content creation than the web, despite its smaller physical format. Traditional web platforms are ideal for building communities, relaying information and promoting purchases, while the tablet environment houses a greater ability to create, according to the findings. Plus, the touch keyboard is used more willingly by kids because it is more ergonomic.

More specific to Geronimo Stilton's properties, the app version made it easier for kids to create sketches and comics using elements of the character's world—kids didn't have to look from the keyboard to the screen repeatedly, and the touch-enabled buttons were easier to handle than a physical keyboard. So, Atlantyca put more importance on this feature within the app, where kids can now create their own newspaper with articles, headlines and pictures.

"The children helped fine-tune the app before its release," says Mazzucco, adding that overall changes were made to accommodate more touch and immersion features.

The app launched in Italy at the end of March and has since garnered more than 70,000 downloads across the country. And with a US release slated for later this year and an app spinoff in the works, the mobile momentum is stronger than ever at Atlantyca. Still, Mazzucco contends, the PC is just as relevant to the brand's growing community and social networking interests.  $\odot$ 

New preschool app Hopster hopes to simplify content choices for parents by putting games and TV shows under one roof



### **New Kid** in Town

### From many to one

Traditional TV and digital execs place the power of online television into preschoolers' hands

**Show on the road** With children in the UK clocking more than 23 million hours of TV every day, and roughly 10% of British three- to four-year-olds using a tablet at home, it's not surprising that television and digital media execs would start to think out of the box and about the screen. Among them are former Nickelodeon UK MD Howard Litton and Skype/LoveFilm advisor Peter Read, who are backing *Hopster*, a new kids TV channel embodied in a single app that delivers preschool shows and games to touchscreen devices. The subscription-based service founded by former Viacom exec Nick Walters will launch later this year with episodes of licensed content and interactive learning games that are automatically customized based on the TV shows that kids are watching.

**Preschool project** "Everyone's trying to figure out what the future of TV-watching for kids looks like. For us, it's touchscreen devices," says Walters, former GM of Nickelodeon Russia. "So, we're bringing together premium TV content into a whole series of activities that are fun and help kids learn. It's almost like two screens in one screen." Walters says Hopster is on the lookout for age-appropriate material that's "at the top end of the market." The company is currently striking non-exclusive licensing deals, but at press time was not ready to disclose specifics. What he is willing to discuss is why the preschool market is best-suited for this kind of ad-free, app-based streaming model. "Preschool is really where you can take shows kids love and seamlessly build experiences that keep them engaged," says Walters. "That fusing of entertainment and learning really resonates most with preschoolers. Clearly, we think there's a big opportunity for a product like this or we wouldn't be here."

**Next moves** *Hopster* will launch across the UK exclusively on the iPad before expanding to more countries and touchscreen devices. From a distribution perspective, the company is focused primarily on building its content slate and partnerships before developing games in-house. The gaming element, Walters contends, will make for a seamless transition from viewing to playing, which isn't readily available in an overcrowded digital media market. "Parents are overwhelmed by the sheer amount of choices in the app world," Walters says. "So a single app that's trusted is a model that just makes sense." In fact, that next-generation thinking is what inspired the company name, which is meant to be a playful take on Hipster subculture. The hope, of course, is that *Hopster* will channel that same sense of modern singularity as its namesake. –Wendy Goldman Getzler

### **The Digits**

Numbers that speak volumes about kids and technology

Nearly

4000 of parents believe that their child is spending less time playing with traditional toys...

(The NPD Group)

...But parents dishing out big bucks on technology—more than

**US\$200** 

or more per year—are 40% more likely to also buy action figures

(The NPD Group)

The **1%** 

Big traditional media companies made roughly US\$1.6 billion in revenue last year from licensing their content to streaming services like Netflix—accounting for 1% of their aggregate revenue

(Bernstein Research)

In the US, tablet ownership among parents with young kids rose from 10% in December 2012 to 50% in June 2013

(Pew Research)

New heights? Limited-edition, free Skylanders from this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo hit eBay at a price tag of nearly

**US\$1,000** 

(eBay)

### TechWatch Keeping an eye on the gadget scene

### Hasbro gets into the game

### What it is

Just one week after dishing out US\$112 million for a majority stake in Coloradobased mobile developer Backflip Studios, Hasbro revealed its Telepods toy line that will transport physical characters into popular mobile games, such as upcoming app Angry Birds Star Wars II from Rovio Entertainment and Lucasfilm.

### **How it works**

Available in September, the Telepods line will be fully integrated into the sequel to Angry Birds Star Wars that garnered more than 100 million downloads. While using the new app, players can tap the Telepods icon within it, place one of 30 Angry Birds Star Wars figures on the included Telepods base, and then place the base on a mobile device to implant that figure into the digital game.

### What it means

With Activision's Skylanders generating more than US\$1 billion at retail, it's clear that in-game toys are more than on-trend and traditional toycos need to find their own place in the space. Using Angry Birds as a springboard, Hasbro's Telepods may have a greater chance than ever to soar at retail.

-Wendy Goldman Getzler





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Enter online now at ikids.kidscreen.com/awards

# **CARTOON FORUM**

For the second year running, the Euro biz is set to financing. Check out these projects to watch.

BY JEREMY DICKSON



lustrated by Ben Cort, this comedic toon follows the zany adventures of five underpants-obsessed aliens. They inhabit Planet Pantaloona, of course. It's a world where the aliens' love of underpants and need to possess them flourishes, because, unlike Earth, Pantaloona's people don't really wear any.

Format: 52 x 11 minutes Budget: US\$6.8 million

Status: In development and producing a pilot ep with full voice animatics, 3.5 minutes of animation, three scripts and a bible. Tiger's now on the lookout for distribution and broadcast partners

**Danger Dog** Led by a fearless canine who laughs in the face of danger, this George Evelyn-created series follows the adventures of a hapless team of professional daredevils that travels the world in an enormous gaudy van. Speed ramps, flaming hoops, rocket cars and crocodiles are just a few of the things the troupe carries with it so it can put on The Danger Dog Big Danger Show at a moment's notice. The idea for the series was, in fact, inspired by a real-life stunt team housed across the street from Spider Eye's Cornwall office.

Co-producers: Spider Eye (UK), Kavaleer Productions (Ireland)

Style: 2D digital Format: 52 x 11 minutes

Budget: In region of US\$10,000/min

Status: In development with two full scripts, and readying a trailer and pilot for Cartoon Forum. Negotiations with

interested broadcasters are underway.





Chamelia Based on the bestselling books by acclaimed author Ethan Long, Chamelia revolves around a three-year-old chameleon who, unlike her fellow color-shifting reptiles, would rather stand out than blend into the crowd in her small town, Camoflage. Chamelia, in fact, is all about finding the joy of being unique. The series reinforces strong social/ emotional themes of diversity, acceptance, confidence and individuality.

Co-producers: Technicolor Entertainment Services (France), Mercury Filmworks (Canada)

Style: 2D animation Format: 52 x 13 minutes Budget: US\$327,000/half hour

Status: Currently in development with a bible, two x 13-minute scripts and a teaser ready to go.

preschool

**Pigsticks and Harold** One thing's for certain—life is definitely more exciting with Pigsticks around. This comedic preschool series focuses on the exploits of unlikely best friends—Pigsticks, the world's most optimistic pig, and his trusted buddy, Harold the hamster. Each episode sees the pair head off on a mad-cap adventure to break a world record. Whether blasting off into space or climbing the world's tallest mountain, Pigsticks' "act first, think later" mentality tests the more reasonable Harold's patience, but the loyal sidekick always finds ways to help his persuasive porcine pal reach his goals.

**Co-producers:** JAM Media (Ireland), Walker Productions (UK)

Style: 2D animation
Format: 52 x 11 minutes
Budget: In line with industry
standard of US\$350,000/half hour

**Status:** In development and preparing scripts with CBeebies, which is sponsoring the series at Cartoon Forum.





### Mirette Investigates This

comedic travelling detective series, based on the books by Fanny Joly and Laurent Audouin, follows the world adventures of Mirette. She's an eight-year-old with a passion for investigating, aided by assistant Jean-Pat, a lazy but extremely efficient ginger tomcat that just loves his food. Each episode sees the wisecracking duo solve a new case and bring villains to justice while learning about local culture and customs. The tone of the comedy is punchy and irreverent, but never mean.

**Producer:** Cyber Group Studios (France)

**Style:** Digital 2D animation **Format:** 52 x 13 minutes **Budget:** US\$6 million

**Status:** In development with a trailer, a bible and two scripts already produced. The show has received two prebuy offers in France, and Cyber Group is on the lookout for co-producers.

### **Myles Hobbs**

Associate Publisher mhobbs@brunico.com 426-408-2300 x492

### **Jonathan Abraham**

Account Manager jabraham@brunico.com 416-408-2300 x295



**Mondo Yan** This action-comedy tells the story of three teenage heroes selected to save the fragile natural balance of Yan World, their mystical homeland that just happens to be precariously perched atop abandoned skyscrapers. The comedy comes in the mix of main characters Xia, a brave samurai who can master anything but being a teenager, freespirited dance-obsessed warrior April, and Pai, a clumsy rodent that's convinced he is in fact the world's most lethal ninja.

**Producer:** Imira Entertainment (Spain)

6 to 12

**Style:** CGI animation **Format:** 52 x 11 minutes **Budget:** In the ballpark of US\$200,000/half hour

**Status:** In development with one script, 10 outlines and a portion of the budget raised. Turner Broadcasting Spain and Red Kite Animation are on-board as CF sponsors.

**Epic Eric** The world's most-loved superhero, The Core, gets a second chance at growing up after his nemesis, Catalyst, transforms him into the 12-year-old version of himself. Now back at school, with his nephew Dwayne at his side, The Core quickly realizes that navigating middle school may actually be far more treacherous than dealing with even the most dastardly of villains.

**Producer:** Treehouse Republic (Ireland)

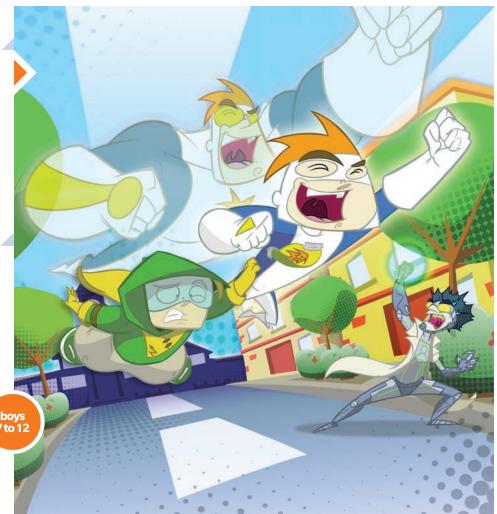
**Style:** 2D digital animation **Format:** 13 x 22 minutes

Budget: Between US\$3.2 million

and US\$4.3 million

**Status:** Treehouse is in development on scripts and a trailer, and has so far scored financial support from the Irish Film Board. Irish pubcaster RTE is sponsoring the show

in Toulouse.



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They get to be Bill and Ted every day! He used to call me Florence from The Jeffers because I refused to a his phone. If you watch a scary movie and you turn the audio off it quickly becomes comedy. I thought that was strange when I was a kid. What does it mean? Does he have pubic hair now? Likeability is a hard

nut to crack if you're trying to make a **bold**, assertiv character

- **Debra Joester** referencing the 1989 classic in relation to the runaway success of Smosh co-creators Ian Hecox and Anthony Padilla
- Disnev's **Adam Bonnett** on why he wasn't the best assistant Rich Ross ever had at Nickelodeon
- Headphone manufacturer **Bob Picunko** describing the importance of having good sound in all forms of entertainment
- Animation historian Jerry Beck on 1940s Captain Marvel's turn from 13-year-old boy to grown man when he said "Shazam"
- Jackie Edwards, from CBeebies, relates the challenge of writing strong girl characters without making them come off as bossy



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